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Book Review on Wang Xuedian's *Chronicle of the 20th Century Chinese Historiography*

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Abstract: Wang Xuedian's *Chronicle of 20th Century Chinese Historiography* is a chronological masterpiece on 20th-century Chinese historiography in recent years. It organizes affairs year by year, deals with historical figures in the order of events, and discusses scholarship through historical figures, reflecting the profiles of 20th-century Chinese historiography in both macroscopic and microscopic perspectives. It unfolds not only the multifaceted historiographical landscape of modern China, but also the socio-ideological context underlying its remarkable changes. Adopting an annalistic format for its cardinal narrative, the Chronicle also consorts with a variety of other historiographical genres and is of great significance to philology, academic history, and intellectual history.

Key Words: 20th century; Chinese historiography; chronicle; multifaceted

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Chronicle of the 20th Century Chinese Historiorgaphy, 2 volumes, by Wang Xueidan (editor-in-chief), Cheng Feng, Guo Zhendan and Jiang Meng (compilers), Commercial Press, Beijing, 2014.

The 20th-century China, still tottering in the transition from tradition to modernity, witnessed yet another apogee in academic history since the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Chinese and Western thoughts intertwined and interacted, bringing about unprecedented cornucopia of new scholarship. Historiography, one of the most noted in academic disciplines, had undergone immense, often "explosive" and "well-blowing," transformations, the measures and magnitudes equally unprecedented. To give a retrospection to the development of Chinese historiography over the eventful century would be undoubtedly a worthy project. Indeed, enormous enthusiasm and energies had been spent on the endeavor, and some commendable proceedings were out, having enhanced the general public knowledge on the topic. Nevertheless, before 2014, a thorough work that covers the overall progress of the 20th-century historiography had been wanting. The present state in the field of historiographical research dictates that an appropriate genre be adopted to render the full picture on the centurial progress, and chronology is seen as the most ideal choice because of its objectivity and comprehensiveness.

Severalchronological compilations on the 20th-century Chinese historiography already exist, but seeking neither creativity nor discovery, they merely excerpted known facts and events from documents of academic history and had them arranged in unadorned chronological formats. Many appear as an addendum to the monograph, their contents sketchy and crude, their accounts erroneous and omissive, and are apt to be styled products of raw-material-collection rather than sophisticated historical writings. This state of underdevelopment did not befit the hefty status of the 20th-century historiography in the Chinese academic history.

Chronicle of the20th-Century Chinese Historiography, published by the Commercial Press in 2014, makes up for the deficiency. The project is accomplished under the leadership of Wang Xuedian's, a prominent historian at Shandong University and the editor-in-chief of the celebrated academic journal Literature, History & Philosophy, who assumes the role of editor-in-chief, and the compiling efforts of three young scholars, Chen Feng and Guo Zhendan from SDU, and Jiang Meng from Renmin University.

Prof. Wang, a pioneer and representative in the realm of contemporary historiography, had authored several works of akin nature such as The Historical Destiny of the Ideological Trend of Historicism, The Mainstream of Historiography in the Latter Half of the 20th Century, and The 20th-Century Chinese History Review, etc. His preponderance is particularly acknowledged in the field of Marxist historiography, for which he has brought out original and important construction on a series of theoretical issues. "Over the past two decades, Wang has published many important works and established himself as an expert on post-1949 Chinese historiography."[1] comments Q. Edward Wang, a professor at the University of Rowan and the secretary general of the International Commission for the History and Theory of Historiography.

The Chronicle, totaling four volumes and two million words, is divided into two parts: 1900—1949, and 1950-2000. It clusters up affairs year by year, deals with characters in the order of events, and discusses scholarship through characters; in both macroscopic and microcosmic views, it reflects the profiles of the 20th-century Chinese historiography in depth. It seeks extensiveness in selecting materials, highlighting trends and significant currents yet covering as many facets as possible. Lavishing ink on ideologies, events, documents, communities, education, and academic exchanges at home and abroad, it also sheds lights over domestic and international affairs related to historiography, whether they were political, ideological or cultural. Therefore, the Chronicle unfolds not only a landscape of the 20th-century Chinese historiography but also a socio-ideological context subterranean to the remarkable changes.

Chronology is a befitting instrument for representing the diachronic and synchronic natures of academic development, as it effectively avoids repetitions; however, the genre also suffers some disadvantages. First, long-term events might be easily disjoined, cut into pieces, and scattered about, the narrative suffering incoherence. Second, many untestable events, due to the obscurity of their happening years and months, are difficult to be positioned, which results in omissions. To make up those known issues, the Chronicle adopts annalistic format for its cardinal narrative, but also consorts with a variety of other historiographical genres. It makes the best use of their boons and shuns the pitfalls, records major events in the cardinal narrative using a sequential time order, which Edward Gibbon calls "that infallible touchstone of truth,"[2] and renders a complete picture against the backcloth of myriad particulars.

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〔1〕 Q. Edward Wang, "Historical Writing in Twentieth-Century China," Chinese Studies in History, vol. 45, nos. 2—3, Winter 2011—12/Spring 2012, pp. 3—6.

〔2〕 P. B. Craddock eds., The English Essays of Edward Gibbon, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 507.

The book is a multifaceted, multidimensional representation of the magnificent 20th century which cannot possibly be unfolded linearly. Under the vehemently impacts of the Western disciplinary institutions during the first half of the century, the aged Chinese historiographical establishment was confronted, and faced the needs to reform and reorganize. In the lost era, China's modern historiography was yet to define its academic orientation and disciplinary characteristics. Therefore, the notion "historiography" defined in this book does not fully tally with the concept commonly used presently; it is rather a term of extended connotations. In a sense, its underlying dimensions coincide with that of the "Chinese learning," both covering provinces of history, literature, and philosophy. The literary and philosophical aspects mainly focus on scholarship pertinent to historiography. Studies on the Dream of the Red Chamber, of the Water Margin, and of the Hu Feng incident in literary history, and those on Hu Shih and Feng Youlan in that of philosophy, overlapping immensely with intellectual history, can aptly be seen as within the discipline of historiography. This definition of the parameters of historiography conforms to the unique outlook and actual status of China's academic landscapes in the 20th century.

Unlike mostworks of academic history, the Chronicle, in addition to its disciplinary concerns, also pays heed to historians' life, academic intercourses, and whereabouts they sojourned. In life experience, it focalizes on the scholar's academic biography, including his education at home and abroad, and his teaching activities. In academic intercourses, attention is spent on the communications between scholars, and how schools and factions differed, say, the disputes between the School of New Culture Movement and that of Xueheng. In scholars' mobility, the Chronicle mainly records their domestic traveling activities. In the first half of the 20th century, batch migrations happened three times. In 1926 after the occupation of Beijing by the Manchurian warlords, a legion of PKU scholars flew southward to Fujian and Guangdong; in the aftermath of the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident, scholars swarmed to the southwest Sichuan and Yanan, or to the northwest Yan´an; the year 1949 witnessed yet another exodus of intellectuals retreating to Taiwan with the Kuomintang regime. There were flows of individuals, too: Fu Sinian's 1926 entry into Sun Yat-Sen University, Tao Xisheng's 1931 trip from Shanghai to Beijing, and Qian Mu's 1949 withdrawal to Hong Kong. Not irrelevant trifles at all, those individual journeys had immense influence over the geographical distribution of contemporary academic personalities, which deserve no small attention.

TheChronicle draws essences from the century-old forerunning studies, but does not rest content with the findings of its predecessors; an embodiment of innovative views and research methods, its values and significances lie in its sophisticated compounding of philology, academic history, and intellectual history into one being.

First and foremost, the Chronicle carries vast philological weight. The primary goal of this work is to collect and organize documents of the 20th-century historiography. Through the retrieval of original materials, many hazy accounts are clarified, misplaced historical times rectified, and falsified myths straightened out. For instance, the disputes over the time of the first print of Guo Moruo's Researches on Ancient Chinese Society had never received a fair attribution; our editor though, using the earliest edition, settles it to exactness—January 20th, 1930. The initial formulation of the phrasing "fading out thoughts and highlighting academics" in the 1990s is identified as incipiently being proposed in the letter of Li Zehou to the editorial staff of The Twenty-First Century bimonthly of Hong Kong in June 1994. The Chronicle, having collected many critical historiographical works of the past century, also constitutes a store of bibliographical references. Coming by it, the readers, aside from gaining familiarity with masters, masterpieces, notable events, and famous debates,

may also be amply introduced to essential documents and bibliographies on particular topics of the 20th-century Chinese historiography.

Secondly, the Chronicle is a remarkable product of academic history. The unearthed facts, which were buried in ancient dust before, afford a fresh perspective for understanding the engagements of modern academic personalities and schools. The excavation of a great amount of first-hand records, for examples—papers published in Late Qing periodicals such as Hubei Students, Anhui Vernacular Newspaper, and Henan, various local gazetteers, the translated foreign histories in the 1930s under Marxist agenda, and the mass criticism on People's Daily promulgated during the Great Cultural Revolution, etc. —provides a treasure trove for researchers in the field.

The editorand compilers seek to uncover overlooked historical facts from original resources, make up deficiencies of preceding researches, retouch the academic pictures drawn by antecedents, and eventually come a new vista of the 20th-century Chinese historiography. Discoveries beget renovated assessments and convictions. The unveiling of certain late Qing historical materials results in a subversive understanding to the outcome of the "New History" revolution, that is, the old school remained robust, and was to demonstrate its potency in the upcoming project of the compilation of the Qing History Draft. Again, the excavating of Literature and History, a journal founded in 1962 to release raw materials and articles of textual studies brings out a perception on the tenacious survival of the higher textual criticism tradition in the post-1949 environment of Marxism. Shunning a simplistic view, the Chronicle establishes itself in multi-dimensional perspectives which lead to compound interpretation and profiling of varied historic phrases.

The thirdsignificance of this work lies in intellectual history. Though by nature a chronicle of historiography, historiographical concerns constituting its main body, it nevertheless also deals with intellectual cases which have shaped the progress of historiography. The work amply reflects an assortment of ideological movements, which include but are not limited to: the debates over science and the view of life, the Chinese cultural base, the mass criticism on Hu Shi, Hu Feng, Lin Biao and Confucius, the campaign to review Legalism and condemn Confucianism, the open public discussion on criterion of truth, and the Chinese Culture Rush in the 1990s. Upon opening this book, the readers could readily access the spectacle of the intellectual landscapes and discern what alteration it had gone through in the past 100 years. The ideological and cultural settings, and in where derives the momentum for historiographical evolution, are situated under their eyes.

The publication of theChronicle has been enthusiastically received by China's academic circles. Chen Zuwu, a researcher at the Institute of History of CASS, calls it "an academic masterpiece," and predicts that "its overall impacts over academics will grow as time goes by." Yang Qingcun, former deputy director of the National Social Science Planning Office, impressed by its voluminousness, the invaluable academic spirits it upholds and the far-reaching influence it exerts, hails the compilation as "a key, foundational project which advances the studies of Chinese historiography in the 20th century." He also pronounces it "an actual deed rendered by the academia to glorify the time-honored tradition of Chinese historiography." Zhang Guangzhi, professor at Fudan University, remarks more vividly: "'Sunrise is not caused by crowing, but crowing does remind of the sunrise!' Shall we put it this way: it is the Chronicle that reminds us of the sunrise." Professor Zhang also holds that "in the academic history of modern China, the Chronicle is a cardinal work which adopts the chronological form to exhibit the progress of historiography in the 20th century."

Prof. Qu Lin Dong of Beijing Normal University believes that by reading this book, one not only beholds

the panorama of the 20th-century historiography but also positions himself on the forefront of the field, a vantage point for discovering unsolved problems, which opens up opportunities to reclaim virgin soil. Prof. Chen Qitai from Beijing Normal University points out that the content of this book is not limited to historiography, the inclusion of "Chinese learning" rendering it encyclopedic. Prof. Meng Xiangcai of Shandong University believes that the work has adequately demonstrated the engagement of politics and history and accurately outlined the connection between methods and achievements of historiography. Prof. Meng approves the work for its balanced pen in rendering intertwined relationships between and among scholars, schools, and academic proceedings: key points are highlighted, general accounts given well-proportioned length, and narrative and chronology joined seamlessly. Professor Wu Huaijun of Beijing Normal University gives accolades to two distinctive features of the book. First, the inheritance of the fine tradition of History As A Mirror, in which touches of multiple hands do not conflict with statements of a single school. The editor has not only a sense of responsibility but also that of dialectical thinking which runs through the entire compilation. Therefore, says Professor Wu, the practices are worthy of academic emulation. Second, in format the work draws wisdom from the national tradition of history writing, that is, to take chronology as the backbone, but not a confinement; genres of Subject Outlines (gangmu) and biography are as well sampled. Inheriting and innovating at the same time, the Chronicle is as much reflective of the editor's independent thought as it is pioneering in historiographical frontiers. These attempts give the academic community inspiration, and incentive to ponder over how to enhance the construction of national historiography. Prof. Wang Dong of East China Normal University maintains that the editor, "transforming the venal into the wonderful," breathes new life into the traditional form of annals, and that his wise choice of the chronological framework maximizes its accommodation of historical phenomena.

In short, theChronicle is a substantial work on modern Chinese historiography in recent years. It takes in all voices and views, provides an essential instrument for researchers of modern Chinese academic history and historiography, and is of critical reference value to the disciplines of intellectual history, philosophical history, literary history, and philology. Of course, problems and deficiencies exist, the most noticeable being that, the Chronicle, however exhaustive and comprehensive, cannot possibly be all-embracing in documenting every fabric of a discipline, to say nothing multiple interdisciplinary subjects. The editor, having to represent some happenings with others in the compilation, must make choices to discard and dispense; he lacks the space, and occasionally discernment, to have all essential profiles included in the work. There might be omissions—sometimes important ones—due to personal prejudices or preferences. This, however, is an universal predicament that every editor of such a colossal work has to face.

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